

News from the Nile Basin Development Challenge

Water scarcity and land degradation strongly affect the livelihoods of millions of households in the Nile basin. Agriculture is predominantly subsistence, low-yielding and rain-fed. To meet the needs of the growing populations and restore the landscapes, we need to reverse the land degradation and improve productivity.

The Nile Basin Development Challenge (Nile BDC) is funded by the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the Ethiopian highlands through a landscape (watershed) approach to rainwater management.

This news sheet provides information on some key events in the life of the project.

National platform on land and water

One of our main objectives is to facilitate a structure for joint learning and exchange among different actors working on land and water management in Ethiopia.

On 8 April 2011, we organized a first meeting to examine the need for a national platform to catalyze knowledge sharing and joint planning across institutions and organizations working in these areas. The report is online at <http://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/3670>

On 19 December, the second platform meeting will identify and prioritize actions for collaboration.

NBDC project spreads to Wollo ...

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is funding a one-year small grant to extend our project approach in Wollo (Amhara region). The project will develop a learning site to help enhance the adaptive capacities of local communities to climate-change induced water scarcity. It will also provide evidence to governments to consider climate change and ecosystems in land use planning and natural resource management.

On 24 and 25 November, the project was launched with a stakeholder experience-sharing workshop at Wollo University.

Reviewing rainwater management evidence and lessons

From 5 to 7 October 2011, Nile BDC project staff and partners met in Bahir Dar. The three-day event was hosted by the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute.

The first day was with many different stakeholders from the region – policymakers, research, civil society, and academia. The event was opened by H.E. Ayalew Gobeze, President of Amhara Regional State. Participants examined different topics in depth, including: Rainwater management challenges, solutions, and evidence; promising rainwater management solutions from Ethiopia; and a review of rainwater management research solutions and evidence. The second and third days were internal progress review discussions, with a field trip to Fogera.



Stakeholders discuss rainwater management in Bahir Dar [ILRI/Habtamu]

South Africa Forum on Water and Food

The Nile Basin was well-represented at the recent third International Forum for Water and Food in South Africa.

Besides all the various sessions where we contributed, facilitated and led discussions, an important result was the decision by the three African Basins (Limpopo, Nile and Volta) to collaborate more deeply to develop an African rainwater network and a shared research agenda – to synthesize lessons across the continent. Tilahun Amede from the Nile will lead this work.

Local innovation platforms

In recent months, we started to catalyze and support the formation of local innovation platforms in our three study sites of Diga, Fogera and Jeldu.

The idea is for the platforms, involving many local actors and stakeholders, to jointly identify constraints to improving land and water management at each site and then plan some practical joint actions to deal with them.

If they develop as planned, the platforms will catalyze greater local participation and ownership of interventions, connect with national initiatives, and help make Ethiopian landscapes more productive.

A brochure explains this work (in English, Amharic, and Oromiffa - <http://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/3874>).

Besides the initial work 'on the ground', we have been asked by other Basins and projects to share our experiences with innovation platforms. Presentations and sessions at the Rome 'share fair' and Johannesburg International Forum on Water and Food were well-attended and stimulated wider reflection and discussion.

National policies on rainwater management

A new NBDC report by the Ethiopian Economics Association reviews the development of national policies with respect to rainwater management in Ethiopia.

It focuses on five policy implementation challenges: First, to ensure that policies adequately draw lessons from existing policies and strategies; second, ensuring appropriate policy implementation guidelines, laws and regulations; third, building up policy implementation capacity at all levels; fourth, devising a proper policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation system that could feed into policy refinement and adjustment; and fifth, enhancing policy coordination and integration (across sectors). The report is online at <http://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/10293>

GIS training in Bahir Dar

From 15 to 19 August, with the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute, we delivered a training course on Geographic Information System (GIS) to 16 people from partner organizations. Targeted to the needs of agricultural research collaborators in the project, the training covered next to basic GIS knowledge, training on field data collection, use of GPS, data transfer, and creating maps based on hard copy topographic maps (geo-referencing). The aim was to ensure that our partners can actively contribute to, and use, our GIS work.

Diary ...

In August, Dr. Simon Langan (IWMI) joined the Nile 2 project team; taking over from Dr. Bharat Sharma (IWMI) who took another assignment.

In September, Dr. Beth Cullen (ILRI) joined the Nile 2 project to work with participatory methods of community development.

In December and January, Dr. Deborah Bossio (IWMI) and Dr. Shirley Tarawali (ILRI) move to other assignments beyond the project.

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The Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) is funded by the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). It aims to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the Ethiopian highlands through a landscape approach to rainwater management. It comprises five linked projects examining: 1) Learning from the past; 2) developing integrated rainwater management strategies; 3) targeting and scaling out of rainwater management innovations; 4) assessing and anticipating the consequences of innovation in rainwater management systems; and 5) catalyzing platforms for learning, communication and coordination across the projects.

The NBDC is implemented by a consortium comprising the International Livestock Research Institute, International Water Management Institute, World Agroforestry Centre, Overseas Development Institute, Nile Basin Initiative, Stockholm Environment Institute, Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, Catholic Relief Services – Ethiopia, Oromia Regional Research Institute, Amhara Agricultural Research Institute, Bahir Dar University, Ambo University, Nekemte University, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water and Energy.

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